

Message Text

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11

ACTION EUR-12

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INR-05 LAB-01 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 SP-02 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1045

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB PO

SUBJ: LISBON PORT WORKERS UNION PROTESTS RULING OF
MINISTRY OF LABOR

REF: OPORTO 0315 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: A MINISTRY OF LABOR RULING PREJUDICIAL TO THE PORT
WORKERS UNION WAS THE CAUSE OF A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION BY
LISBON'S PORT WORKERS NOV 14 AND A ONE-DAY SIT-DOWN STRIKE
NOV 15. THE MINISTRY INITIALLY UPHELD ITS RULING, THUS
FAVORING NON-UNIONIZED PORT WORKERS WHOSE CAUSE IS CHAMPIONED
BY THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED INTERSINDICAL, BUT THE DIRECT
INTERVENTION BY MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS AND THE
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ESTABLISHMENT OF A STUDY COMMISSION TO REPORT ON THE PROBLEM

BY DEC 15 HAS COOLED THE SITUATION. END SUMMARY

1. THE PORT OF LISBON WAS PARALYZED NOV 14 AS AN ESTIMATED 3500 UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN STAGED A DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR IN PROTEST AGAINST A MINISTRY RULING INCORPORATING "CASUAL" NON-UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN INTO THE UNIAO DOS SINDICATOS DE TRABALHADORES DO PORTO DO LISBOA. MINISTRY'S RULING WOULD HAVE PERMITTED ALL "CASUALS" ABOVE 18 YEARS OF AGE WHO HAVE WORKED AS LONGSHOREMEN FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR TO JOIN LONGSHOREMEN'S UNION, THUS NULLIFYING PRESENT SYSTEM WHEREBY UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN HAVE FIRST CALL FOR EMPLOYMENT AND RECEIVE PREFERENTIAL WAGES AND BENEFITS. UNDER MINISTRY'S RULING, PERHAPS 1000 NEW LONGSHOREMEN WOULD HAVE BEEN ADDED TO UNION ROLLS AND AVAILABLE WORK DOLED OUT IMPARTIALLY. DEMONSTRATION WAS ALSO A SHOW OF STRENGTH TO PROTEST ROUGHING UP OF LONGSHORE UNION PRESIDENT JOSE LINO FIGUREDO RIBEIRO BY NON-UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN IN FRONT OF MINISTRY OF LABOR ON NOV 13.

2. UNION LEADERS WERE UNABLE TO SEE MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS BUT WERE RECEIVED BY SUB-MINISTER JOAO AMARAL. EIGHT HOURS' NEGOTIATIONS ENDED WITH ONLY A PROMISE TO DISCUSS MATTER AGAIN NEXT WEEK BUT MINISTRY REAFFIRMED ITS POSITION THAT ALL WORKERS EXERCISING AN OCCUPATION HAVE THE RIGHT TO UNIONIZATION. MINISTER OF LABOR SUBSEQUENTLY CALLED AT PORT WORKERS UNION NOV 16 AND A NEW MINISTERIAL DECREE WAS ISSUED SUSPENDING THE INTEGRATION OF THE "CASUALS" INTO THE UNION AND ESTABLISHING A JOINT COMMISSION TO REPORT ON THE SITUATION BY DEC 15.

3. UNIAO DOS SINDICATIS DE TRABALHADORES DO PORTO DE LISBOA IS ACTUALLY A FEDERATION OF FIVE UNIONS, I.E., LONGSHOREMEN, (ABOUT 1800), DOCK WAREHOUSEMEN (1400), TALLYMENT (300), RIVER BOATMEN (500?), AND FRESH FISH HANDLERS. PORT WORKERS UNION IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH INTERSINDICAL AND REPRESENTS STRONGEST SINGLE OPPOSITION UNION TO THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED INTERSINDICAL. AS NOTED BY LISBON'S 4913, THE PORT WORKERS UNION RECENTLY SPONSORED A SUCCESSFUL SEMINAR BY THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT FEDERATION ON TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION.

4. COMMENT: ISSUE HAS STRONG POLITICAL OVERTONES AS INTER-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SINDICAL HAS ESPOUSED THE CAUSE OF THE NON-UNIONIZED LONGSHOREMEN. WHILE A GOOD FAITH INTERPRETATION COULD BE PLACED ON THE MINISTRY OF LABOR'S RULING FAVORING THE NON-UNIONIZED WORKERS AND PREJUDICIAL TO THE PORT WORKERS UNION, THE PREVAILING ATMOSPHERE HERE WOULD FAVOR THE INTERPRETATION THAT INTERSINDICAL WAS ATTEMPTING TO USE ITS POLITICAL CONTACTS IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOR (E.G. JOAO AMARAL) IN ORDER TO REWARD ITS FRIENDS AND PUNISH ITS ENEMIES. THE MINISTER'S DIRECT INTERVENTION NOW

MAKES LIKELY A COMPROMISE SOLUTION ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES.
SCOTT

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